

**Listing Of Claims:**

Claim 1 (currently amended): An apparatus for tensioning flexible load restraining strips for use in securing cargo within a transport container, which cargo is subject to shifting forces during transport, said apparatus for tensioning comprising:

a torque rod having a first proximal end and a second distal end with a longitudinal channel extending through said torque rod from the distal end substantially along the length of said torque rod toward said first proximal end to form a tension mechanism having first and second tines operable to be ~~position~~ positioned upon opposite sides of overlapped free ends of flexible load restraining strips,

said first and second tines having a channel spacing between said tines at the proximal end of said torque rod that is less than the channel spacing at the distal end of said torque rod;

a reaction arm connected to the proximal end of said torque rod for supporting said torque rod and ratchet rotation of said torque rod; and

a ratchet mechanism connected to the proximal end of said torque rod for selectively providing ratchet rotation of said torque rod to tension the flexible load restraining strips by twisting the overlapping free ends of the flexible load restraining strips and thereby drawing the load restraining strips together to

tension said load restraining strips across a load to be secured within a transport container.

Claim 2 (original): An apparatus for tensioning flexible load restraining strips for use in securing cargo within a transport container as defined in claim 1 wherein:

said first and second tines are coated on an exterior surface with polytetrafluoroethylene.

Claim 3 (original): An apparatus for tensioning flexible load restraining strips for use in securing cargo within a transport container as defined in claim 1 wherein:

said first and second tines are enrobed with a polytetrafluoroethylene coating.

Claim 4 (original): An apparatus for tensioning flexible load restraining strips for use in securing cargo within a transport container as defined in claim 1 wherein:

said first and second tines have a coating of polytetrafluoroethylene on the interior tine surfaces formed by the channel between said tines.

Claim 5 (original): An apparatus for tensioning flexible load restraining strips for use in

securing cargo within a transport container as defined in claim 1 wherein:

said channel spacing between said first and second tines of said torque rod uniformly increases from the proximal end of said torque rod to the distal end of said torque rod.

Claim 6 (currently amended): An apparatus for tensioning flexible load restraining strips for use in securing cargo within a transport container as defined in claim 1 wherein:

the width of said channel between said first and second tines at said ~~closed~~ proximal end of said torque rod is approximately 0.3 inches and the width of said channel between said first and second tines at said distal end of said torque rod is approximately 0.4 inches.

Claim 7 (original): An apparatus for tensioning flexible load restraining strips for use in securing cargo within a transport container as defined in claim 1 wherein:

said first and second tines are semi-circular in cross-section.

Claim 8 (currently amended): An apparatus for tensioning flexible load restraining strips for use in securing cargo within a transport container as defined in claim 1 wherein:

said first and second tines are generally rectangular ~~is~~ in cross-section and the

external configuration is approximately square.

Claim 9 (original): An apparatus for tensioning flexible load restraining strips for use in securing cargo within a transport container as defined in claim 1 wherein:

the exterior configuration of said first and second tines, in cross-section, is generally hexagonal.

Claim 10 (original): An apparatus for tensioning flexible load restraining strips for use in securing cargo within a transport container as defined in claim 1 wherein:

said torque rod is fabricated from titanium.

Claim 11 (original): An apparatus for tensioning flexible load restraining strips for use in securing cargo within a transport container as defined in claim 1 wherein:

said torque rod is fabricated from a titanium and vanadium alloy.

Claim 12 (original): An apparatus for tensioning flexible load restraining strips for use in securing cargo within a transport container as defined in claim 1 wherein:

said ratchet mechanism being operable to be set for selective rotation of said torque rod in either a clockwise or counterclockwise direction to tension the flexible load restraining strips across a load within a container.

Claims 13-23 (cancelled)